

A Voice in the Wilderness

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST



JULY 2010

Oh, now we remember why we all came to Grand County! We have had at long last such a nice spell of beautiful cool summer days. It's definitely time for all you snowbirds to return. We miss you. And we have the following activities all waiting for you.

On the 2nd we have our third annual Celebration of God and Country service 7PM at St. John's.

Our yearly "loaves and fishes" Sunday comes on the 11th, when we have our largest in-gathering of food for local food banks.

Our neighbors at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Central City, host their annual "Episcopal Day at the Opera" on Sunday the 18th.

On Sunday the 25th we welcome special guest Meg Greeley, who will lead an adult education session on spiritual direction.

And finally our second sung Evening Prayer on the Lake service will be coming on a date to be announced.

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Granby, Colorado

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A Word from the Rector

Dear Friends,

Have you ever considered just how rich and diversified our spiritual lives are? Just as rich and diversified as our lives themselves, since our spirituality—our way of experiencing God’s presence—touches absolutely every aspect of our lives. Or it should, since of course we never want to wall God off from any aspect of life. Jesus wants all of us. It is a useful exercise, I think, to consider various aspects of living and to reflect on how we experience God in them.

This month we have two opportunities to explore different expressions of spirituality. First, at 7PM, Friday, July 2, we can explore and deepen the relationship between our faith and our role as citizens. At our third annual “Celebration of God and Country” we will reflect on our nation—its history and ideals—and our understanding of God’s role in its development. This program of patriotic readings, national songs, and prayers has been warmly praised by all who have experienced it. It is a fine way to begin the holiday weekend, to focus on what we are celebrating and to do so in a reverent and non-jingoistic way. Please come, and please bring a friend.

A far different, and deeper exploration of spirituality is available at the Adult Education session scheduled for Sunday June 27th, when Meg Greeley will offer a teaching on spiritual direction. Spiritual direction, which can take many different forms, is an ancient tradition in the church, enabling millions of Christians to deepen their faith. And you will have an opportunity to sample it yourself this fall when Kaye Piper, who is trained and holds a certificate in spiritual direction, will offer a program in group spiritual direction. Please read her contribution to this newsletter to begin learning about direction and to begin considering whether something like this might enrich your own spiritual life.

Spirituality is not just about what we do together on Sunday mornings!

---Fr. Spencer+

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Notes about Ministries

Method(ists) to our madness

St. John's hosted about thirty youth and adult chaperones from a Methodist churches from Sterling, Illinois, for the week of June 21. They pretty much took over the building and for those six days it was pretty much impossible to find any floor or counter space outside the sanctuary and our offices. The kids (and their counselors) were just terrific, and they accomplished a great deal of work on the Habitat for Humanity house under construction in Hot Sulfur Springs. See the bulletin board for their note of appreciation to St. John's. (In case you're wondering, they showered at the Middle School.)

All the groups normally using the church during the week were very cooperative about moving to other accommodations, with several using Cranmer Chapel.

What in the hall?

Our parish hall is and will continue to be quite a mess for a couple of weeks, at least. With the cooperation of vestry, Art, Architecture, and Landscape Committee, and the Green Team, we are undertaking to insulate the ceiling of the parish hall. We know that we lose a lot of heat through that roof, and this step should dramatically lower our heating bills for years to come. We are also taking advantage of the occasion to revisit the possibility of improving the lighting there.

So do not be alarmed when you next pass through the room to see scaffolding, lots of building materials around, and men (and women) hard at work.

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The stud from St. John's

Fr. Spencer represented St. John's at a ceremony at the Hot Sulfur Habitat site and presented to the building team the wood plank with the names of all those parishioners who donated and signed the plank. St. John's raised \$240 in donations, leaving our friendly rivals at the Church of the Eternal Hills in the dust after having been edged out by them last year.

Mass on the Grass/Prayer on the Lake

St. John's continues to look for opportunities to move out into the community, and we had beautiful weather for two recent outdoor events. On June 20 we celebrated Sunday Eucharist at Polhamus Park. (Although now that they have a pavilion to use, it's probably not technically "on the grass" any more.) The weather was perfect for our Sunday brunch that followed the service.

And the following Sunday we had our first prayer service on Grand Lake of the summer. In order to provide some variety, instead of praying the service of Compline, about ten worshipers sang "Holden Evening Prayer," a popular musical setting of the Evening Prayer service. Sang it right well, too!

Multiplication Tables

We will do our own multiplication of the loaves and fishes when we surround the Table (or altar) with bags of food stuffs as we observe Loaves and Fishes Sunday on July 11. You can pick up bags and shopping lists at the church, but if that is not possible, then please just fill up your own bags with non-perishable foods and drop them off at the church. All bags will go to local food banks to ease the perennial summer shortage they all experience.

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Sermon of the Month

Sermon preached at Polhamus Park—our “Mass on the Grass”—on June 20th, the Feast Day of St. John the Baptist (tr.)

When you think about it, it is really quite remarkable how much space the New Testament writers give to John the Baptist. He is not, after all, actually a part of the Jesus movement. Which is also strange, isn't it? John never travels with Jesus; he is never taught by Jesus, he never teaches about Jesus, he does no ministry or healings in Jesus' name. Here is a man who is the earliest and most significant to identify Jesus as “the Lamb of God,” and he is never mentioned again as being a follower of Jesus. Furthermore, there is practically no indication at all that this hellfire and brimstone preacher ever really “got” Jesus message about grace. And, in fact, from prison, he comes to doubt Jesus and sends Jesus a message, “Are you the one,” or are we to wait for another?

What a fascinating figure he is, this man for whom our church is named! And I think that is why so much attention is paid to him in the gospels. He was seen at the time as such a fascinating, significant, and powerful figure that it was absolutely necessary to come to terms with him. He had a strong following of his own. To leave him out or to downplay his role, would be like writing a history of the Bush administration without talking about Dick Cheney. Well, maybe I shouldn't push this analogy very far!

So much space for John, but if you read the passages about John carefully, much of this space is actually spent talking about Jesus. It's really about Jesus.

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The prolog of the Gospel of John, that short but so powerful statement about God's plan for the world, mentions John twice. And each time it is that he came to testify to Jesus. Do you hear? It is really about Jesus.

And at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, even before it actually, before he has any followers at all, John says "Look, there is the Lamb of God." It is really about Jesus.

You know, there are probably several very good reasons why John is known as John the Baptist and not John the Episcopalian. Without meaning any aspersions against our Baptist friends and co-workers in Christ, John wouldn't make much of an Episcopalian, even if we were to let him in. His hygiene is questionable, his people skills are nil, his clothing and his eating habits are execrable. I mean, really! There are so many things about John that we would find so hard to take, we oh so polite, civilized, tamed, "nice" people. But it isn't about John, is it? It's really about Jesus.

[This reminds me of a conversation I once had with Bert Womack, former Canon to the Ordinary of the dioceses and Interim Dean of the Cathedral. Someone had just been described as a "nice" person, and Bert replied, "Nice" is overrated." There is wisdom in this; there are many far more important qualities than "nice," and we Episcopalians are probably more inclined to forget this than others.]

And, so, if we are to live into the name of the one we so presumptuously claimed, we need to point to Jesus. For us, it must really be about Jesus.

A man once said to me—a good man, and a good Christian—that for him church was really all about outreach. But he was wrong. Outreach—showing love and care for others, especially the poor and the outcast—is absolutely necessary. But it is really about Jesus. Our caring for others

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must be about Jesus or else it's just being neighborly. Our nurturing our own, must be about Jesus, or else it's just being family. Our worshiping with quality must be about Jesus, or else it's just enjoying the ritual and the music. Our inquiring into meaning and truth must be about Jesus, or else it's just more self improvement. And our celebrating all of life must be about Jesus, or else it's just having fun. Finally, sharing the joy of this life with others must be about Jesus, or else it's simply a business plan for church growth.

There is nothing wrong with being neighborly or valuing family or liking ritual and music or learning or having fun or being a growing church. Nothing wrong with any of that; in fact, they are all great goods. But if it's not about Jesus, it's not the work of a Christian church.

John the Baptist had many flaws, many shortcomings. But he pointed to Jesus. He knew that his work wasn't about himself, but that it pointed outward to one whose sandals he was not fit to untie. And the lesson for us is surely that your work, that my work, that the work of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Baptist is not what it is for its own sake. That all of this work takes on meaning only in so far as it points to Jesus.

That it is really about Jesus.

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Updates from the Church Family

When Carl comes marching home

The Men's Saturday Bible Breakfast group gave Carl Wells a "hearty welcome then" on Saturday June 26, when it met at Carl and Allie's home in Homestead Hills. Carl had just been released from his rehab the day before and headed immediately for the hills. There was much to celebrate, as Carl continues to grow stronger after four months of hospitalization following complications from hip replacement surgery. Welcome home, indeed, Carl!

Father and Father

Fr. Spencer enjoyed a lunch reunion this week with the Rev. Warren Hicks, comparing notes and war stories. (Just kidding about the war stories.) Warren, the son of Don and Sally Hicks, is visiting from his parish of St. Luke's in Worcester, Massachusetts.

A sweet sorrow

It's not exactly saying good-bye, but we will be seeing less of Makenna Morck and Tyler Orr. They were saluted with a gift and prayers in church on the last Sunday in May, and they were feted at a marvelous reception in the parish hall following their high school graduation on June 5. Being members of St. John's, they were of course both valedictorians! Makenna is off to the University of Colorado, and Tyler will be attending Colorado School of Mines. So, don't forget where your home church is, you two.

Let's make a deal

Eric and Catherine Mowrey used their Winter Park ski shop to help out Habitat for Humanity. They sponsored their second annual ski equipment

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swap/sale on the date of the Habitat Hobble fundraiser, and raised several hundred dollars for the cause.

MIA?

Do not be dismayed if you are missing some clergy this month. Deacon Diane, through a combination of personal and professional obligations, will miss the first three Sundays of July. (Yes, deacons have lives of their own that need tending to.) And Fr. Spencer is taking the last week of July, leading up to Sunday, August 1, to see to family matters in California. His replacement will be named soon.

Group Spiritual Direction

Remove your shoes, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. – Exodus 3:5

Do you desire a deeper and closer relationship with God? Could God be calling you to this in a spiritual community? What does spirituality mean for you? Do you ever wonder if others have spiritual struggles and joys? Are you wanting to give more to your prayer life? This longing for God is the foundation of the spiritual life and spiritual direction where a group gathers regularly to become more aware of how God is working in their lives.

Some at St. John's have voiced such needs. Paul and others in the early church acknowledged the bond of seeking and sharing which marks spiritual community and thus helped form their community of believers. Spirituality is attention to the Divine within us. It is a way in which we express a living faith in a real world. Christian spirituality is the concrete way Christians live out their relationship with the God of Jesus. Spiritual Direction is a way of honoring our desire to live from the core of our being, the place where we are truly ourselves, where we are one with all.

The following may help in explaining what group spiritual direction is and is not;

- It is not a prayer group, although prayer is the key element of the process.

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- It is not a sharing group, although sharing is a large part of it.
- It is not a support group, although spiritual direction is nothing if not supportive.
- It is not a place for problem solving, although problems and issues may later be resolved through what happens in this setting.

Defining elements of group spiritual direction are;

- God inviting people to be together
- God gifting each person through the presence of the other
- The directee assuming responsibility for his or her own life with God
- Members supporting each other in prayer
- Emphasizing God's intimacy with us

There is lots of silence between periods of talking, and a great deal takes place in this silence. Because of the prayerfulness, spiritual direction groups are a wonderfully safe place and a unique form of spiritual community.

Groups of 3-5 people meet regularly, and this process is not intended to replace other small groups.

Join us for a class about Group Spiritual Direction with Meg Greeley on July 25th after service and coffee. Meg has initiated group spiritual direction in five rural parishes in Colorado. She is a spiritual director and coordinator of prayer ministries at an Episcopal church in Golden.

Group Spiritual Direction will be starting at St. John's in September of this year.

Do not fear....I have called you by name. You are mine. –Isaiah 43:1

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July 2010

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
				1	2	3
					2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER * 7 PM "GOD & COUNTRY" SERVICE	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT EDUCATION				NOON - MISSIONAL STUDY GROUP * 6:45 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * LOAVES & FISHES SUNDAY				6:45 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER * 6 PM VESTRY MEETING	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 8 AM HABITAT HOBBLE * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
EPISCOPAL DAY AT THE OPERA				NOON - MISSIONAL STUDY GROUP * 6:45 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
9 AM HOLY EUCHARIST * 10:30 ADULT ED: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION	FR SPENCER OUT ALL WEEK!			6:45 PM EVENING PRAYER & BIBLE STUDY	2:45 PM CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER	8 AM MEN'S BIBLE BREAKFAST * 5 PM HOLY EUCHARIST AT CRANMER CHAPEL

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